

Dealey Plaza christened landmark



From right: J.R. Scott of Williamsport, Pa., and Loren Ivey of Plano listen solemnly Monday to speakers at the dedication of Dealey Plaza as a National His-

toric Landmark. Police estimated the crowd for the ceremony at 3,000, although organizers' estimates were twice as high.

The Dallas Morning News: Pat Davison

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By David
Staff Writer of The

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continue to inspire them.

By designating the plaza a national landmark, she said, "we recognize the lasting place this site will have in the history of this country."

The plaque was set in the ground just above Elm Street, within several feet of the spot at which President Kennedy was fatally shot. The assassination occurred moments after Mrs. Connally, sitting in the jump seat of the presidential limousine, said, "Mr. Kennedy, you can't say that Dallas doesn't love you."

U.S. District Judge Barefoot Sanders, whose voice occasionally caught with emotion, told the crowd Monday that, "as we remember this day with a sadness and frustration that is impossible to describe, we also remember the challenges he brought us while he was alive."

"It has been said John F. Kennedy did not solve the problems of war and peace, but he inspired the hope that they could be solved," he said.

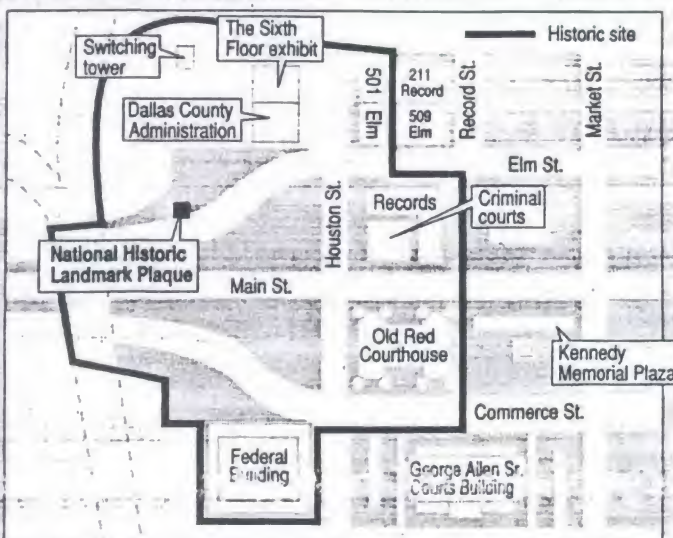
U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison told the audience that the assassination "brought about a sea change in American politics and American society."

Security was tight for Monday's ceremony. The plaza was sealed with wooden and aluminum barriers and watched over by 215 Dallas police officers. A gallery of sheriff's deputies looked down from the bridge over the triple underpass, where the speakers' platform was located.

Errant students in the crowd were picked up by truant officers, but police reported no arrests of audience members, according to Sgt. Richard Baumgardner of central operations.

THE HISTORIC SITE

The National Historic Landmark plaque at Dealey Plaza was formally dedicated Monday.



The plaque says:

Dealey Plaza Has Been Designated a National Historic Landmark
This Site Possesses National Significance in Commemorating
The History of the United States of America 1993
National Park Service
United States Department of the Interior

The Dallas Morning News

Police estimated the crowd at 3,000, but some organizers placed the crowd at twice that number, said David Dunnigan of Read-Poland Associates, which was hired to stage the ceremonies.

A group of about 20 anti-abortion protesters briefly tried to gain admittance to the site but were redirected to the east side of Houston Street.

The carnival atmosphere occasionally present at the 20th and 25th anniversaries of the assassination was missing Monday. Some specta-

tors briefly hoisted a large sign calling on President Clinton to appoint a special prosecutor to look into questions surrounding the assassination. Others wore T-shirts expressing skepticism that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman in the shooting.

But the majority appeared to have come solely out of curiosity or to honor President Kennedy. Among the latter was Patricia Nelson of Houston. As the ceremony proceeded, she stood in the middle of a barricaded Elm Street, visibly

shaken by the emotion of the moment.

"It's my most vivid memory from childhood," said Ms. Nelson, who was 12 when President Kennedy was killed. "It's like things changed after that. . . . The world changed, and we lost that innocence. It would be nice to get it back."

The ceremony concluded moments before 12:30 p.m., the time of the shooting. Two F-14 fighter jets from the Dallas Naval Air Station screamed overhead in salute.

After the ceremony, a large crowd gathered around the plaque, some leaving flowers, photos and wreaths in an impromptu tribute.

The small plaque reads in part: "Dealey Plaza has been designated a National Historic Landmark." It makes no mention of the assassination.

Conover Hunt, a historian who worked with the National Park Service in preparing the plaque, said that, with the exception of the place name, the wording is determined by Park Service policy.

"We could have called it the John F. Kennedy Assassination Site," she said. "But there was a fairly strong feeling that the community was not ready to see the 'A' word put in print in bronze."

Monday's crowd included Jean Wallace of Dallas, who was also on Dealey Plaza 30 years before.

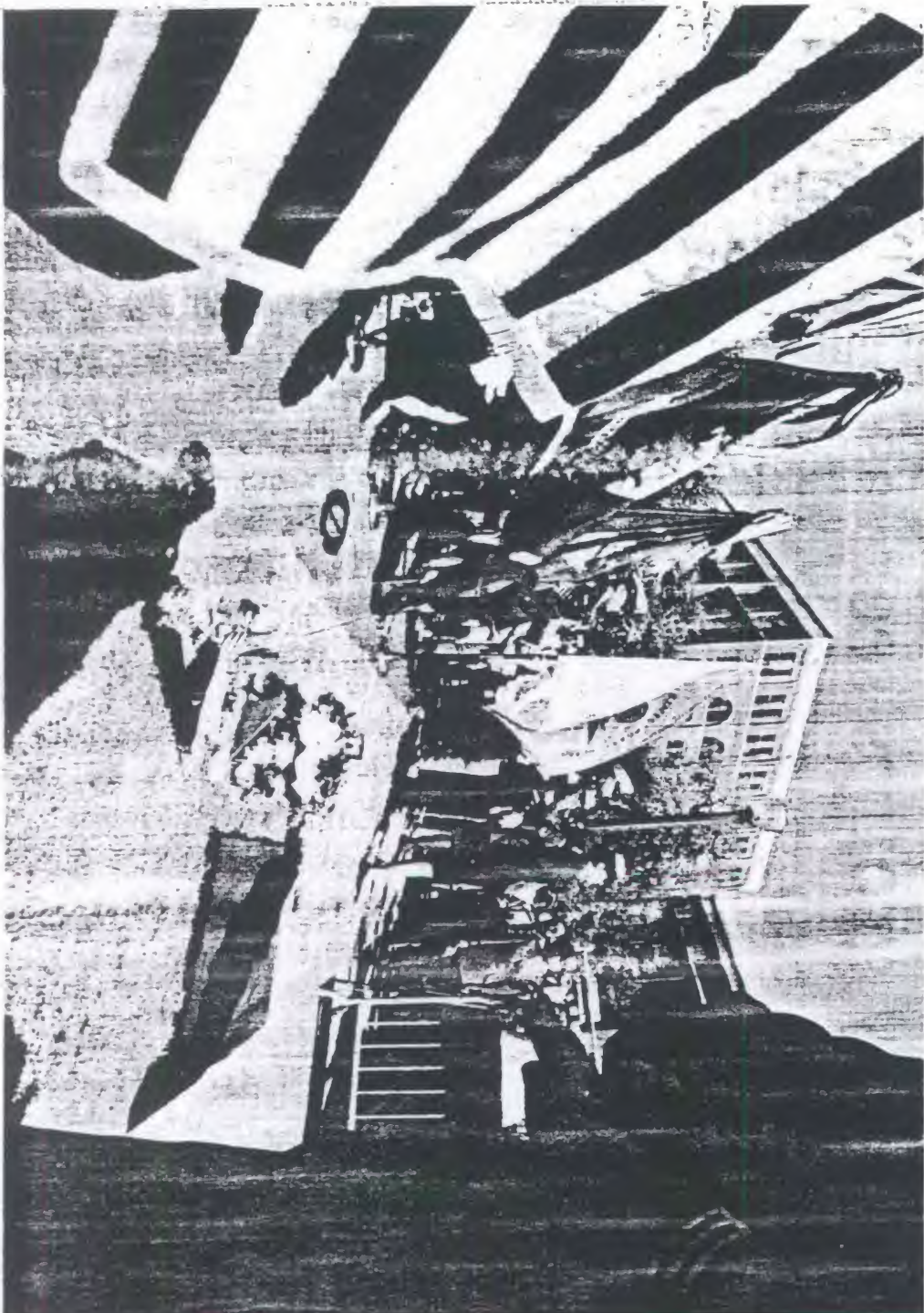
She said she has visited the site often since then.

"For years, it really weighed on me. But now, I'm beginning to ease up on it," she said.

Like many people, she remarked on the coincidence of the weather.

"It was a beautiful day," she said. "But when he got shot, the clouds rolled over."

Staff writer Al Brumley contributed to this report.



A color guard stands Monday over the plaque at Dealey Plaza, dedicated by Nellie Connally, wife of the late for-

mer Gov. John Connally. The Connallys rode with President John F. Kennedy on the day of the assassination.

The Dallas Morning News: Ken Gelger